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DE RUEHKI #0557 1670702
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R 160702Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9717
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1265
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFSS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000557

SENSITIVE SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV KDEM KPAO PREL PHUM CG

SUBJECT: FRENCH RADIO FREQUENCY STILL SILENCED IN PROVINCE
SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

REF: Kinshasa 00448

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The DRC Government is still preventing the population of Bunia, Orientale province, from listening to Radio France Internationale's programs. RFI Bunia's frequency was 'silenced' on May 5 (reftel) in retaliation for the French radio station's alleged continued attempts to destabilize the country. As the Congo painfully emerges from years of conflict that have greatly undermined the authority of the central government, the DRC authorities are determined to show media they find disturbing that they will make no compromise in matters of national security. End summary.

¶2. (U) RFI's frequency was not actually shut down, as the antenna of the radio station is situated within the compound of a MONUC local base. Local radio station Canal Revelation used to pick up RFI's signal and broadcast RFI news across the region. According to human rights organization Journaliste En Danger, the provincial representative of the media affairs and communication ministry verbally ordered Radio Revelation to stop relaying the French radio station's signal. An anonymous local public servant could not act in this manner without orders from his hierarchical supervisor and, more importantly, the backing and direct involvement of the national intelligence agency (ANR).

¶3. (U) In response to the DRC Government's accusations of subversive activity, on May 11 RFI denied purveying misinformation and slanted reporting on the DRC. However, RFI's declaration of good faith was quickly called into question a few days later as it aired a detailed report disclosing ongoing disquiet and brewing rivalries within ANR and blaming the homeland security director for this confusion. This new 'incident' reinforced the Government's determination to bring RFI to heel.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: RFI continues to broadcast in other major DRC towns, and containing the French radio's station signal in Bunia had no real impact on its wide appeal and influence. The GDRC might decide on a more coherent and productive course of action to prove RFI wrong. Controlling information is clearly of vital importance to the Government as it struggles to assert its authority in a fragile security environment. But continued intransigence on the part of the DRC leadership will leave international media unharmed, and negatively affect local independent media in the long run. End comment.

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